



## Deccan History: Cosmopolitan World

Deccan history is full of cosmopolitan world where mobility, fluid identities, cross-cultural interactions and political strategies defy the modern imagination of fixed boundaries, watertight religious categories and definite notions of truth and falsity.

- The Deccan attracted people from Iran, Iraq, Europe, China, Africa and Southeast Asia. It was the hub of the trading world with some of the finest port cities.
- The immigrants from Persia and Africa and mercenaries from within the region rose to the ranks of nobles, becoming contenders to the throne and successfully establishing great kingdoms.
- Deccan became a melting pot, a land of opportunities, with channels of social mobility that questioned and re-casted established pedigrees.

### Patrons of art, culture

- Deccan had the grandeur of cities like Vijayanagara, Golconda, Bijapur and Hyderabad with impressive architecture and treasures, especially the fabled diamonds.
- These cities were so popular that as late as 1813, an American city in Illinois changed its name from Sarahsville to Golconda and **Vijayanagar was compared to Rome**.
- The courts of the Vijayanagar ruler, **Krishnadevaraya** and Adil Shahi Sultan of Bijapur, **Ibrahim Adil Shah II** were legendary for their art and culture with **Persian, Telugu and Marathi** languages scaling new heights.
- Thus, Deccan had a pluralistic society that accommodated everybody. The Deccani elites moved from one patron to the other for lucrative careers irrespective of their religious affiliations.
- The 'Hindu' rulers of Vijayanagara patronised Sanskrit culture but also adopted the fashions from West Asia.
- They constructed temples, whose pillars had engravings of Turkish and Arabic figures and adopted titles like **Hinduraya Suratrana meaning 'Sultan amongst the Hindu kings'** and Yavana Rajya Sthapana Acharya, 'the monarch who established the kingdom of the Turks'.
- Influenced by the Telugu world of the Vijayanagara kingdom, the 'Muslim' Qutb Shahi sultan changed his name from Ibrahim to Abhirama.
- The Adil Shahis of Bijapur were perhaps one of the most innovative rulers whose attitudes defied all religious stereotypes. Ali Adil Shah invited Catholic priests to his court and his Persian text, **Nujum al-Ulum** (Stars of Sciences), included paintings of Hindu deities and a translation of a Sanskrit text on Varshik astrology.
- His successor, the famous **Ibrahim Adil Shah, styled himself as the son of lord Ganapati and goddess Saraswati** and Hindu gods like Shiva and Parvati and Hindu epics influenced his writings.
- Commissioning a painting of Saraswati in which the goddess was depicted as a Deccani princess, art under Ibrahim also indicated the influence of European styles.

### Conclusion

- A new era beginning from the end of the 13th century with grand kingdoms of Vijayanagar, Bahamanis, Adil Shahis, Qutb Shahis and Nizam Shahis holding sway and creating an impressive scenario in Deccan ironically became the reason for their rivalry with the mighty Mughals who ruthlessly crushed them by the beginning of the 18th century.
- So the Deccan, long neglected in medieval and early modern history writing and viewed mainly

through the prism of the Marathas and their rivalry with the Mughals, has lot more to offer in terms of its great achievement in art, architecture and culture.

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